



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

March 4, 2004

Leo Gaeta,
Chair

Yvonne Lopez-
Morton,
Vice Chair

Diana Avalos,
Executive Committee

Homero Tamez,
Executive Committee

Gabriel Banfi

Faviola Barbosa

Uriel Iñiguez

Karla Padilla-Reyna

Gabriel Portugal

Rebecca Villareal

Antonio M. Ginatta,
Executive Director

Senator Bill Finkbeiner
Washington State Senate
208 Newhouse Building
PO Box 40445
Olympia, WA 98504-0445

RE: SSB 6481

Dear Senator Finkbeiner:

The Commission writes to you to express support for the work of Emerald Downs and the Washington Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association (WHBPA) in promoting employment and educational opportunities for Latino workers. A significant portion of employees at Emerald Downs are of Latino descent: almost two-thirds of the horse grooms are Latinos, as are one in five of all exercise riders.

These Latino workers are supported by their employers with services and programs not usually available to the typical lower-income worker. They have access to English as a Second Language classes, to childcare, to vision and dental care coverage, and to immigration assistance. The Groom Elite Program, funded through the WHBPA, provides valuable job progression training to the grooms at Emerald Downs. We recently spoke with a Latino exercise rider at Emerald Downs who praised his employer for assisting him with navigating the workers' compensation system when he was injured at work.

This type of employee-employer relationship is admirable. We hope that more employers follow the model provided by Emerald Downs and the WHBPA, and we hope that the Legislature recognizes such efforts.

Please do not hesitate to call us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Antonio M. Ginatta
Executive Director

1210 Eastside St. 1st Floor PO Box 40924 Olympia, WA 98504-0924
Toll-Free: (800) 443-0294 Olympia: (360) 753-3159 Fax: (360) 753-0199
www.cha.wa.gov hispanic@cha.wa.gov